Sessional Teaching

AUTC Project

Guidelines for training, managing and supporting

Sessional Teachers

• *case studies*   • *reports*   • *links*

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA

QUT
Queensland University of Technology

Guidelines for managing, supporting and training sessional teaching staff at university

An AUTC-funded project initiative

The following guidelines were developed by the AUTC Sessional Teaching Project team and are available in electronic format at www.tedi.uq.edu.au/sessionalteaching. The guidelines have three main audiences:

1) University administrators or managers;
2) Heads of Schools/Departments; and
3) Course* coordinators.

Thus, the guidelines are arranged into three levels: the University level, the School or Department level, and the course coordinator level. There are accompanying checklists for the levels of Head of School, course coordinator and sessional teachers available on the project website.

For the purpose of these guidelines, sessional teachers are defined as any university instructors who are not in tenured or permanent positions. The term commonly applies to postgraduate students, research fellows, external people from industry or professions, part-time tutors and clinical tutors and people who are regularly employed on a subject-by-subject basis (often over a number of years). The appointments may be academic, research or general.

In developing the guidelines, the project team relied on a variety of sources for information including the results of a national survey of over 40 sessional teachers and subject coordinators, university policies and documents and a vast range of related research and education literature. The guidelines serve to distil all of this information in a way that makes it more accessible and useful to university managers and teaching staff.

Please note that due to the variety of terms used to describe study programs at different institutions, the terms "course" and "subject" are used interchangeably within these guidelines. Within some institutions, a course may also refer to a module, a unit or a paper.

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

QUT

Training, support and management of sessional teaching staff

This is an Australian Universities Teaching Committee (AUTC) funded project aimed at promoting the development of policies and support mechanisms for sessional teachers within Australian universities. This project followed the Teaching Large Classes project that was conducted at the University of Queensland in 2001 (www.tedi.uq.edu.au/largeclasses).

The Guidelines in this booklet are developed in more detail on the sessional teaching website (www.tedi.uq.edu.au/sessionalteaching).

Project team

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1. Recruitment and employment practices

University level

In view of the University's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

a) Use and number of sessional staff

Is there a limit on the number or percentage of sessional teachers that Faculties or Schools should employ at any one time? A policy that limits use of sessional teachers helps to avoid excessive use or over-reliance on sessional teachers. Alternatively, once a certain number of sessional teaching staff are employed within a School/Department, a tutor coordinator position (or equivalent) should be created. Consider keeping statistics about the use of sessional staff within each Faculty/School.

b) Guidelines and procedures for recruiting staff

Are there systematic guidelines or procedures for recruiting sessional staff? If so, are they widely distributed to and involve all Faculties and Schools? Are they analogous with full-time staff recruitment practices and enterprise bargaining agreements? Is there a policy that encourages the recruitment of individuals with an expressed and/or demonstrated commitment to teaching?

c) Issues to be addressed in recruitment policy

Do policies regarding the recruitment of sessional staff address issues of:
- Open competition for positions on the basis of merit?
- Equal opportunity for all candidates?
- Encouraging a variety of candidates to apply so as to ensure that sessional staff are representative of the community at large (in terms of race, gender etc)?
- Maintaining applicant confidentiality?
- Ensuring that selection procedures are efficient and effective?

d) Policy on payment

Does a policy exist to ensure that sessional staff receive appropriate payment according to award rates and enterprise bargaining agreements? Are sessionals (including industry professionals) fairly renumerated given their skill levels, knowledge and experience?

e) Policy on roles and responsibilities

Is there a policy to ensure sessional teachers' roles and responsibilities align with their level of appointment. Do sessional teaching staff receive a statement of generic duties listing the specific activities and tasks that the appointee will perform? This could accompany the appointee's contract (see below) and would ensure that their workload aligns with their compensation. For example, a Level A appointment would not be appropriate if being asked to coordinate a large enrolled course or a large team of tutors.

f) Working agreements

Does a policy exist about the use of working agreements or contracts for sessional teachers? Are there standard aspects of sessional appointments that each working agreement should cover? Are there written procedures for how this should be explained to sessional teachers? For example, discussed with course-coordinators and each signs the contract.

g) Access to resources and facilities

Is there a policy about providing sessional teachers access to office space, necessary supplies, phone, fax and computer facilities, email, library rights and support services? If they are only employed one semester out of two each year, is there a policy concerning how often sessional teachers must reapply for access rights to library, email etc?

h) Policy on staff availability

Are Schools required to specify the extent to which sessional teachers should be available for student consultation time outside scheduled class hours (including via email)? If staff are expected to be available outside class hours, are provisions made for this in terms of access to email, payment for this work etc.

i) Termination or non-renewal of contracts

Is there a policy about how much notice sessional teachers must be given if their contract is to be terminated or if they are not to be reappointed?

j) Access to university policies and processes

Is there a way of making sure that sessional teachers are aware of and given access to policies and processes that affect them, including appeals processes, assessment and plagiarism policies and support services? For example, is there a University (or Faculty or School) handbook or website for all sessional teachers?

k) Responsibilities for training and support

Is there a policy that clearly identifies and outlines the responsibilities of Faculties and/or Schools for tutor/demonstrator training, professional development and support? Is the training and support of sessional staff adequately resourced? Is there a policy that requires sessional staff to be paid for attending all obligatory training and professional development courses? (Also see section 2).

School level

In view of the School's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

a) Use and number of sessional staff

Is there an over-reliance on sessional teachers in any of the School's courses? How do you ensure that sessional teachers are not inadvertently exploited or that full-time staff do not overload sessional teachers? Once a certain number of sessional teaching staff are employed within the School, a tutor coordinator position (or equivalent) should be created.

b) Guidelines and procedures for recruiting staff

Is there a university or School-based policy or system for recruiting sessional teachers? Is it widely distributed to coordinators? Is it analogous with full-time staff recruitment practices and enterprise bargaining agreements? Is this policy consistently followed in your School? Is there a policy that encourages the recruitment of individuals with an expressed and/or demonstrated commitment to teaching?

c) Issues to be addressed in recruiting sessional teachers

Are employment practices equitable and do they encourage diversity in terms of gender, race and disability (i.e. does your pool of tutors approximately represent the wider community)?

d) Payment

How do you ensure that all sessional teachers receive appropriate payment according to award rates and enterprise bargaining agreements? Are they paid at appropriate intervals throughout the semester? Are sessionals (including industry professionals) fairly renumerated given their skill levels, knowledge and experience?

e) Clarifying roles and responsibilities

Do all sessional teachers have a document of agreement or a statement of generic duties listing the specific roles and tasks that each appointee will undertake? This could accompany the appointee's contract (see below) and would ensure that their workload aligns with their compensation. For example, a Level A sessional appointment would not be appropriate if being asked to coordinate a large enrolled course or a large team of tutors. Are any undertaking responsibilities over and above their type of appointment? Do all coordinators discuss with their sessional teachers their expectations and obligations?

f) Working agreements

Is there a university or School policy about sessional teaching contracts and what they should spell out? If so, have all tutors got one? Have all coordinators discussed the contracts with their sessional teachers?

g) Access to resources and facilities

Is there a system to ensure that sessional teachers are provided access to office space, necessary supplies, phone, fax and computer facilities, email, library rights and support services? If they are only employed one semester out of two each year, is there a rule concerning how often sessional teachers must reapply for access rights to School resources, passwords, email etc? Is someone responsible for this so that sessional staff can contact them?

h) Policy on staff availability

Do you specify the extent to which sessional teachers should be available for student consultation time outside scheduled class hours? Is this responsibility formally recognized and rewarded?

i) Termination or non-renewal of contracts

Is there a policy about how much notice sessional teachers must be given if their contract is to be terminated or if they are not to be reappointed?

j) Access to university policies and processes

Is there a way of making sure that sessional teachers are aware of and given access to policies and processes that affect them, including appeals processes, assessment and plagiarism policies and support services? For example, is there a University (or Faculty or School) handbook or website for all sessional teachers?

k) Responsibilities for training and support

Is there a Faculty or School policy that clearly identifies and outlines the responsibilities of the School and/or course coordinators for tutor/demonstrator professional development, training and support? Are sessional staff paid for attending all obligatory training and professional development courses? (Also see section 2).

Course Coordinator level

In view of the course coordinator's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

a) Use of sessional staff

Do you have a mix of both full-time and sessional teaching staff in your course/s? How do you ensure that sessional teachers are not inadvertently exploited or overloaded? If there are large numbers of sessional teachers in your courses, a tutor coordinator position (or equivalent) should be created.

b) Guidelines and procedures for recruiting

If responsible for recruiting sessional teachers, have you read relevant policies (if any exist)? Do you attempt to recruit or retain individuals with an expressed and/or demonstrated commitment to teaching?

c) Issues to be addressed in recruiting sessional teachers

If responsible for recruiting sessional teachers, do you consistently follow existing policies concerning equitable and fair recruitment practices in terms of gender, race, etc?

d) Payment

If responsible for monitoring payment of sessional teachers, have you ensured that they all receive appropriate payment according to award rates and enterprise bargaining agreements? Are they paid at appropriate intervals throughout the semester? Are sessionals (including industry professionals) fairly renumerated given their skill levels, knowledge and experience?

e) Clarifying roles and responsibilities

Do your sessional teachers all have a document of agreement or statement of duties that outline what is expected of them? Is there a statement of generic duties listing the specific roles and tasks that each appointee will undertake? This could accompany the appointee's contract (see below) and would ensure that their workload aligns with their compensation. Have you discussed this with your sessional teachers? Do you always ensure that sessional teachers' tasks and responsibilities align with their level of appointment?

f) Working agreements

Have all tutors received a contract? Have you met with each of them and ensured that they understand the contents of their contracts? Have you witnessed them signing their contract, filed a copy and provided a copy to sessional teachers?

g) Access to resources and facilities

Do you ensure that all of your sessional teachers have access to office space, necessary supplies, phone, fax and computer facilities, email, library rights and support services? Is someone responsible for this so that sessional staff can contact them?

h) Policy on staff availability

Do you specify the extent to which sessional teachers should be available for student consultation time outside scheduled class hours? Is this responsibility formally recognized and rewarded?

i) Termination or non-renewal of contracts

Do you give sessional teachers sufficient notice if their contract is to be terminated or if they should not expect to be reappointed?

j) Access to university policies and processes

Is there a way of making sure that sessional teachers are aware of and given access to policies and processes that affect them, including appeals processes, assessment and plagiarism policies and support services? For example, is there a University (or Faculty or School) handbook, or website for all sessional teachers?

k) Responsibilities for training and support

If there is a Faculty or School policy that clearly identifies and outlines the responsibilities of course coordinators for encouraging and/or providing professional development, training and support? Do you follow it? Are sessional staff paid for attending all obligatory training and professional development courses? (Also see section 2).

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2. Training and professional development

University level

In view of the University's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Orientation and induction

a) Formal induction

Is there a policy about having a formal induction process for sessional teachers (including administrative tasks and facilities etc)? Are sessional staff paid to attend induction training?

b) Clarifying the appointment

Is there a policy about Heads or coordinators discussing contracts with new sessional teachers before the start of semester and explaining job expectations?

c) Evaluation of induction

How regularly and by what means are Schools or Faculties expected to evaluate their induction programs?

d) Point of contact

Is there a policy that there must be a point of contact for sessional staff's queries regarding administrative tasks, teaching and assessment, evaluation of teaching?

e) Providing orientation materials

Is there an expectation that Schools provide sessional teachers with written guidelines or an orientation manual, which will assist them with teaching and other tasks?

f) Information about policies and procedures

Is there an expectation that Schools provide a resource for sessionals (such as a kit, hand-book or website) that contains all relevant information on policies and procedures that affect them including assessment policies, plagiarism policies, equity policies, teaching philosophy etc?

g) Resolving disputes

Are there policies about ethical issues that might arise between sessional teachers and other staff or sessional teachers and students? Do these address issues of abuse of power, sexist/racist behaviour etc?

Professional development in teaching and learning

a) Identifying staff development needs

Is there a policy about identifying and analysing staff development needs of sessional teachers and providing such opportunities? Is this to be done in collaboration with experienced sessional teaching staff?

b) Evaluation of staff development

Is there a policy about how regularly Schools should evaluate the effectiveness of staff development activities?

c) Access to staff development

Does a policy exist regarding sessional teachers' access to formal professional development courses, including those that lead to certification?

d) Facilitating communication

Is there a policy about schools/coordinators making opportunities for sessional teachers to meet and liaise with one another? If required to attend extra meetings that support their work, is payment provided?

e) Provision of resources

Is there a policy about making publications and websites available to all sessional teachers, which describe, explain and commend effective teaching and learning?

f) Training in assessment

Is there a policy about training sessional teachers in assessment procedures (eg marking students' work) to ensure consistency across courses and departments? Does this policy require that payment be provided to attend such training?

g) Support for course coordinators

Is there a policy to ensure that Schools support (through training and/or resources) course coordinators responsible for supervising sessional teachers? How does the university ensure that course coordinators effectively carry out their supervisory duties? For example, is supervision of sessional teachers part of their professional performance review?

Workplace training

a) Training in university systems

Is there a policy about providing sessional teachers with training to use university or School systems that are necessary to complete teaching and other tasks? For example:
- Teaching tools and technologies (such as audio-visual equipment);
- Web-based and other electronic systems used in the course (such as WebCT);

- Assessment systems used to track student results etc; and
- Personnel systems (such as on-line, self-service procedures).

b) Workplace heath and safety

What are the responsibilities of full-time staff members to educate sessional teachers about workplace health and safety? Is there a procedure or set of guidelines about how sessional teachers are to be informed about their workplace heath and safety responsibilities and procedures (for example, a handbook and/or training sessions)?

School level

In view of the School's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Orientation and induction

a) Formal induction

Is there a policy about having a formal induction process for sessional teachers (including administrative tasks and facilities etc)? Are these processes available for all appointees, including those who begin their work at various times throughout the year? Are sessional staff paid to attend induction training?

b) Clarifying the appointment

Is there a policy about Heads or coordinators discussing contracts with new sessional teachers before the start of semester and explaining job expectations?

c) Evaluation of induction

How regularly and by what means are induction programs evaluated?

d) Point of contact

Is there a policy that there must be a point of contact for sessional staff's queries regarding administrative tasks, teaching and assessment, evaluation of teaching?

e) Providing orientation materials

Do you provide sessional teachers with written guidelines that will assist them with teaching and other tasks?

f) Information about policies and procedures

Is there a resource for sessionals (such as a kit, hand-book or website) that contains all relevant information on policies and procedures that affect them including assessment policies, plagiarism policies, equity policies, teaching philosophy etc?

g) Resolving disputes

Are there policies (and related procedures) concerning ethical issues that might arise between sessional teachers and other staff or sessional teachers and students? Do these address issues of abuse of power, sexist/racist behaviour etc?

Professional development in teaching and learning

a) Identifying staff development needs

Is there a process to identify and analyse staff development needs of sessional teachers and providing such opportunities? How regularly does this happen? Is this to be done in collaboration with experienced sessional teaching staff?

b) Evaluation of staff development

How regularly is the effectiveness of staff development activities evaluated?

c) Access to staff development

Does a policy exist regarding sessional teachers' access to formal professional development courses, including those that lead to certification?

d) Facilitating communication

Is there a policy about schools/coordinators making opportunities for sessional teachers to meet and liaise with one another? If required to attend extra meetings that support their work, is payment provided?

e) Provision of resources

Does your School make publications and websites available to all sessional teachers, which describe and commend effective teaching and learning? Do you encourage the scholarship of teaching?

f) Training in assessment

Do all sessional teachers receive training in marking students' work to ensure consistency in assessment procedures? If required to attend this training, is payment provided?

g) Support for course coordinators

Is there sufficient support (through training, time and resources) for course coordinators with supervision responsibilities? How does the School ensure that course coordinators effectively carry out their supervisory duties? For example, is supervision of sessional teachers part of their professional performance review? Do supervision responsibilities accompany a reduction in other aspects of their workload?

Workplace training

a) Training in university or school systems

Is there a policy about providing sessional teachers with training to use university or School systems that are necessary to complete teaching and other tasks? For example:

- Teaching tools and technologies (such as audio-visual equipment);
- Web-based and other electronic systems used in the course (such as WebCT);
- Assessment systems used to track student results etc; and
- Personnel systems (such as on-line, self-service procedures).

b) Workplace health and safety

What are the responsibilities of full-time staff members to educate sessional teachers about workplace health and safety? Is there a procedure or set of guidelines about how sessional teachers are to be informed about their workplace heath and safety responsibilities and procedures (for example, a handbook and/or training sessions)?

Course Coordinator level

In view of the course coordinator's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Orientation and induction

a) Formal induction

Do you ensure that all sessional teachers are included in formal induction processes (including administrative tasks and facilities etc)? Are these processes available for all appointees, including those who begin their work at various times throughout the year? Are sessional staff paid to attend induction training?

b) Clarifying the appointment

Do you meet early on with sessional teachers to discuss contracts, job expectations and implement other induction processes?

c) Evaluation of induction

How regularly and by what means do you evaluate the induction processes you are responsible for?

d) Point of contact

Is there a policy that there must be a point of contact for sessional staff's queries regarding administrative tasks, teaching and assessment, evaluation of teaching?

e) Providing orientation materials

Do you provide sessional teachers with written guidelines, which will assist them with teaching and other tasks?

f) Information about policies and procedures

Is there a resource for sessionals (such as a kit, hand-book or website) that contains all relevant information on policies and procedures that affect them including assessment policies, plagiarism policies, equity policies, teaching philosophy etc?

g) Resolving disputes

Do you discuss ethical issues with sessional teachers that might arise between them and other staff or students? Do these address issues of abuse of power, sexist/racist behaviour etc?

Professional development in teaching and learning

a) Identifying staff development needs

Do you meet with sessional teachers regularly to discuss training needs? Is training of new sessional teachers done in collaboration with experienced sessional teaching staff?

b) Evaluation of staff development

How regularly is the effectiveness of staff development activities for your sessional teachers evaluated?

c) Access to staff development

Do you let your sessional teachers know about formal professional development courses, including those that lead to certification?

d) Facilitating communication

Do you make opportunities for sessional teachers to meet and liaise with one another? If required to attend extra meetings that support their work, is payment provided?

e) Provision of resources

Do you make publications and websites available to your sessional teachers that describe effective teaching and learning? Do you encourage the scholarship of teaching among sessional staff?

f) Training in assessment

Do you ensure that all sessional teachers receive training in marking students' work to ensure consistency in assessment procedures? If required to attend such training, is payment provided?

g) Reflective practice

Do you continuously strive to improve your ability to carry out your supervisory duties? In reflecting on your performance, do you reflect on your supervisory practices?

h) Sharing resources

Do you share teaching tips and ideas with your sessional teachers? Do you encourage scholarship of teaching?

Workplace training

a) Training in university or school systems

Is there a policy about providing sessional teachers with training to use University or School systems that are necessary to complete teaching and other tasks? For example:

- Teaching tools and technologies (such as audio-visual equipment);
- Web-based and other electronic systems used in the course (such as WebCT);
- Assessment systems used to track student results etc; and
- Personnel systems (such as on-line, self-service procedures).

b) Workplace health and safety

Are you in any way responsible for educating sessional teachers about workplace health and safety? Is there a procedure or set of guidelines about how sessional teachers are to be informed about their workplace heath and safety responsibilities and procedures (for example, a handbook and/or training sessions)?

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3. Evaluation and recognition

University level

In view of the University's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Evaluation of teaching

a) Mentor or peer evaluation

Is there a policy on the provision of ongoing support to sessional teachers, especially during the early part of their work? For example, are Schools encouraged to allocate a mentor or peer to new sessionals to monitor work and provide feedback?

b) Student evaluation

Is there a university policy on whether and how often student evaluations of sessional teaching should be conducted? Does your teaching evaluation scheme cater to sessional teachers?

c) Self-evaluation

Are sessional teachers encouraged to systematically reflect on their own practices and performance and hone their teaching skills? Are they assisted with this process via peer or mentor evaluations, teaching checklists, etc?

Performance review

a) Frequency

Is there a policy or guideline regarding the frequency of performance review for sessional staff? If deficiencies are detected, is there a policy about following this up with provision of appropriate training or support?

b) Continuing appointment

Is there a policy about using information obtained in the evaluation and review process for making decisions about the subsequent or future appointment of individual sessional teachers?

c) Performance review for supervisors

Is there a policy or guideline regarding the frequency of evaluation of supervision practices of sessional appointees? Are supervisors encouraged to reflect upon their own supervision by way of peer feedback, discussion forums, etc?

Recognition and acknowledgement

a) Official recognition

Are Schools encouraged to provide sessional teachers with 'official documentation' of their work, such as a simple description of the activities undertaken together with an evaluative comment and feedback to the teacher on their work?

b) Long service or excellence in teaching

Is there a policy analogous to general and academic staff about recognition for long-standing service with the university? Is there a university policy to acknowledge excellence in teaching for sessional teachers?

c) Feedback on training and support

Are there any procedures in place for sessional teachers to report on the perceived adequacy of the training and support they have experienced in their time at the university?

School level

In view of the School's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Evaluation of teaching

a) Mentor or peer evaluation

Is there a policy on the provision of ongoing support to sessional teachers, especially during the early part of their work? For example, are new sessionals allocated a mentor or peer to monitor work and provide feedback?

b) Student evaluation

Is there a School policy on whether and how often student evaluations of sessional teaching should be conducted? Does your teaching evaluation scheme cater to sessional teachers? Are they encouraged to use this feedback to improve performance?

c) Self-evaluation

Are sessional teachers encouraged to systematically reflect on their own practices and performance and hone their teaching skills? Are they assisted with this process via peer or mentor evaluations, teaching checklists, etc?

Performance review

a) Frequency

Is there a policy or guideline regarding the frequency of performance review for sessional staff? If deficiencies are detected, does appropriate training or support follow?

b) Continuing appointment

Is there a policy about using information obtained in the evaluation and review process for making decisions about the subsequent or future appointment of individual sessional teachers?

c) Performance review for supervisors

Is there a policy or guideline regarding the frequency of evaluation of supervision practices of sessional appointees? Are supervisors encouraged to reflect upon their own supervision by way of peer feedback, discussion forums, etc?

Recognition and acknowledgement

a) Official recognition

Does your School provide sessional teachers with 'official documentation' of their teaching work, such as a simple description of the activities undertaken together with an evaluative comment and feedback to the teacher on their work?

b) Long service or excellence in teaching

Are there procedures analogous to general and academic staff for recognising sessional teachers for excellence in teaching or with long-standing service to the School? In what other ways does or can the School show sessional teachers that their work is valued?

c) Feedback on training and support

Are there any procedures in place for sessional teachers to report on the perceived adequacy of the training and support they have experienced in their time with the School?

Course Coordinator level

In view of the course coordinator's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Evaluation of teaching

a) Mentor or peer evaluation

Are there mechanisms of ongoing support for sessional teachers, especially during the early part of their work? For example, are new sessionals allocated a mentor or peer to monitor their work and provide feedback?

b) Student evaluation

Is there a School policy on whether and how often student evaluations of sessional teaching should be conducted? Do you encourage your sessional teachers to conduct student evaluations?

c) Self-evaluation

Are sessional teachers encouraged to systematically reflect on their own practices and performance and to hone their teaching skills? Are they assisted via supervisor feedback, peer or mentor evaluations, teaching checklists, etc?

Performance review

a) Frequency

Is there a policy or guideline regarding the frequency of performance review for sessional staff? If deficiencies are detected, does appropriate training and/or support follow?

b) Continuing appointment

Is there a policy about using information obtained in the evaluation and review process for making decisions about the subsequent or future appointment of individual sessional teachers?

c) Performance review for supervisors

Is there a policy or guideline regarding the frequency of evaluation of supervision practices of sessional appointees? Are supervisors encouraged to reflect upon their own supervision by way of peer feedback, discussion forums, etc?

Recognition and acknowledgement

a) Official recognition

Are sessional teachers provided with 'official documentation' of their teaching work, such as a simple description of the activities undertaken together with an evaluative comment and feedback to the teacher on their work?

b) Long service or excellence in teaching

Are there procedures analogous to general and academic staff for recognising sessional teachers for excellence in teaching or with long-standing service to the School? In what other ways do you or can you show sessional teachers that their work is valued?

c) Feedback on training and support

Are there any procedures in place for sessional teachers to report on the perceived adequacy of the training and support they have experienced in their time with the School?

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4. Integration and communication

University level

In view of the University's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Communication

a) Maintaining contact

Is there a recommendation regarding the means by which to contact sessional staff when need be (eg via email lists)?

b) Roles and responsibilities

Is there a policy to ensure sessional teachers clearly understand the roles and responsibilities expected of them? For example, a statement of duties could accompany the contract listing the specific activities and tasks that the appointee will perform.

c) Directing students to support

Do Schools have a policy or procedure that ensures both sessional staff and students know where to go for concerns or needs external to their course or program of study? How do faculties or schools ensure that sessionals direct students, where appropriate, to the institution's student support services, including:

- academic skills programs
- careers advice
- counselling
- disability services
- indigenous student support
- international student support
- student equity
- IT training
- library skills
- accommodation
- finance
- enrolment
- student union

d) Contact persons

- Is there a policy or recommendation about appointing one or more staff members to oversee selection, training and evaluation of sessional staff, and to act as a contact person for sessional staff with regards to employment and pay issues?

- Is there a policy or recommendation about appointing one or more staff members to be responsible for communicating with and disseminating relevant University or School information and messages to sessional staff?

e) Sharing good practice

Are there any forums for full-time University staff to share ideas and strategies for best practice with supporting, training and managing sessional staff?

Integration

a) Sufficient resources

Is there a policy about allocation of financial and human resources to support sessional teachers? For example, are resources sufficient to allow regular team meetings between sessional teaching staff and coordinators to discuss, review, outline and implement course requirements?

b) Access to facilities

Does a policy or guideline exist regarding sessional teachers' access to facilities, including workspace for preparation and marking, letterbox, email, necessary supplies, telephone, photocopier, copies of all relevant course materials and texts, and library borrowing rights?

c) Access to support services

Does a policy or guideline exist regarding sessional teachers' access to support staff and services?

d) Interaction with colleagues

Do guidelines exist which stipulate how Schools must provide opportunities for collegial interaction to their sessional teachers? Are they paid to attend seminars and/or professional development that allow them to liaise with other teaching staff? For an example, see the PAPTA case study on this site.

e) Contribution to curriculum

Are there any procedures within the university for sessional teachers to make contributions to the development of teaching and learning practices or School curricular? Are Schools obliged to ensure that they are aware of the organisational structures within the Faculty and of the Teaching and Learning interest groups that they might access?

f) Ownership of course materials

Do guidelines exist concerning the ownership of course materials and sessional teachers' access to previous years materials? For example, when materials are developed for a particular course, does the School own them? This would ensure consistency and efficiency over time even with changes in teaching staff.

School level

In view of the School's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Communication

a) Maintaining contact

Are there means by which to contact sessional staff when need be (eg via email lists etc)?

b) Roles and responsibilities

Does your School ensure that sessional teachers clearly understand the roles and responsibilities expected of them? For example, a statement of duties could accompany the contract listing the specific activities and tasks that the appointee will perform.

c) Directing students to support

Do all sessional teachers know what to do if students have concerns or needs external to their course or program of study? Do they know to direct students, where appropriate, to the institution's student support services, including:

- academic skills programs
- careers advice
- counselling
- disability services
- indigenous student support
- international student support
- student equity
- IT training
- library skills
- accommodation
- finance
- enrolment
- student union

Ensure that all sessional teachers know that if students approach them with a need, problem or concern outside the scope of their role as a sessional teacher, they should direct that concern to the appropriate student support service or network; not feel that they must solve all of their students problems for them!

d) Contact persons

- Does your School appoint one or more staff members to oversee the selection, training and evaluation of sessional staff, and to act as a contact person for sessional staff with regards to employment and pay issues?
- Does your School appoint one or more staff members to be responsible for communicating with and disseminating relevant University or School information and messages to sessional staff?

e) Sharing good practice

Are there any forums for supervisors or course coordinators to share ideas and strategies for best practice with supporting, training and managing sessional staff?

Integration

a) Sufficient resources

Is the allocation of financial and human resources to support sessional teachers sufficient to allow, for example, regular team meetings between sessional teaching staff and coordinators to discuss, review, outline and implement course requirements?

b) Access to facilities

Do sessional teachers have access to facilities, including workspace for preparation and marking, letterbox, email, necessary supplies, telephone, photocopier, copies of all relevant course materials and texts, and library borrowing rights?

c) Access to support services

Do sessional teachers have access to support staff, services and facilities? Is it obvious to them all how to access these services and facilities?

d) Interaction with colleagues

Does the School provide opportunities for collegial interaction between sessional teachers? For example, lunch time forums. Are they paid to attend seminars and/or professional development that allow them to liaise with other teaching staff?

e) Contribution to curriculum

Are there any procedures within the School for sessional teachers to make contributions to the development of teaching and learning practices or course curricular? Are sessional teachers invited to attend course/program meetings etc, if appropriate? Do you inform sessional teachers how the courses/subjects that they teach fit into the academic program as a whole? Are they aware of the organisational structures within the Faculty and of the Teaching and Learning interest groups that they might access?

f) Ownership of course materials

Do guidelines exist concerning the ownership of course materials and sessional teachers' access to previous years materials? For example, when materials are developed for a particular course, does the School own them? This would ensure consistency and efficiency over time even with changes in teaching staff.

Course Coordinator level

In view of the course coordinator's responsibility to sessional teachers, consider the following:

Communication

a) Maintaining contact

Are there means by which to contact your sessional staff when need be (eg via email lists etc)?

b) Roles and responsibilities

Do you ensure that sessional teachers clearly understand the roles and responsibilities expected of them? For example, a statement of duties could accompany the contract listing the specific activities and tasks that the appointee will perform.

c) Directing students to support

Do your sessional teachers know what to do if students have concerns or needs external to their course or program of study? Do they know to direct students, where appropriate, to the institution's student support services, including:

- academic skills programs
- careers advice
- counselling
- disability services
- indigenous student support
- international student support
- student equity
- IT training
- library skills
- accommodation
- finance
- enrolment
- student union

Inform all sessional teachers that if students approach them with a need, problem or concern outside the scope of their role as a sessional teacher, they should direct that concern to the appropriate student support service or network; not feel that they must solve all of their students problems for them!

d) Contact persons

- Is there a designated person to oversee the selection, training and evaluation of sessional staff, and to act as a contact person for sessional staff with regards to employment and pay issues?
- Is there a designated person responsible for communicating with and disseminating relevant University or School information and messages to sessional staff?

e) Sharing good practice

Are there any forums for supervisors or course coordinators to share ideas and strategies for best practice with supporting, training and managing sessional staff? If so, do you participate in these sessions?

Integration

a) Sufficient time and resources

Is the allocation of your time and other resources to support sessional teachers sufficient? For example, do you have regular team meetings with your sessional teaching staff to discuss, review, outline and implement course requirements?

b) Access to facilities

Do you ensure that your sessional teachers have adequate access to facilities, including workspace for preparation and marking, letterbox, email, necessary supplies, telephone, photocopier, copies of all relevant course materials and texts, and library borrowing rights?

c) Access to support services

Do you ensure that your sessional teachers have adequate access to support staff and services? Are they all aware of how to access these services and facilities?

d) Interaction with colleagues

Do you provide opportunities for collegial interaction between sessional teachers?

e) Contribution to curriculum

Do you allow sessional teachers to make contributions to the development of teaching and learning practices or course curricular? Are sessional teachers invited to attend course/program meetings etc, if appropriate? Do you inform sessional teachers how the courses/subjects that they teach fit into the academic program as a whole? Are they aware of the organisational structures within the Faculty and of the Teaching and Learning interest groups that they might access?

f) Ownership of course materials

Do guidelines exist concerning the ownership of course materials and sessional teachers' access to previous years materials? For example, when materials are developed for a particular course, does the School own them? This would ensure consistency and efficiency over time even with changes in teaching staff.